

**Yaaba**  
(Grandmother)  
(BURKINA FASO)

Cannes An Arcadia Films (Paris)/Les Films de L'Avenir (Ouagadougou)/Thelma Film (Zurich) coproduction, in association with Burkina Faso, Télévision Suisse Romande, ZDF, La Sept. Centre National de la Cinématographie (Berne). Department Federal des Affaires Etrangères (Berne). COE (Milan). Produced by Freddy Denacs. Pierre-Alain Meier, Idrissa Ouedraogo. Written and directed by Ouedraogo. Camera (color). Matthias Kälin; editor, Loredana Cristelli; music, Francis Bebey. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (Directors Fortnight), May 12, 1989. Running time: 90 MIN.

**Yaaba**.....**Falimata Sanga**  
**Bila**.....**Noufou Ouedraogo**  
**Nopoko**.....**Roukietou Barry**  
**Kougri**.....**Adama Ouedraogo**  
**Tibo**.....**Amade Toure**

The dry, brown plains of Burkina Faso offer a spare backdrop to Idrissa Ouedraogo's exquisitely simple tale "Grandmother." Ouedraogo's second feature (after the acclaimed "The Choice" and short "Issa The Weaver") establishes him as one of Africa's most sensitive directors, capable of communicating with international auds.

Besides arthouse exposure.

"Grandmother" has a pair of 12-year-old leads with built-in appeal for younger viewers.

Bila (Noufou Ouedraogo, an exceptional child performer) is a spunky boy who lives in a small village with his father and stepmother. He befriends Sana (Fatimata Sanga), an ancient old lady shunned by the villagers as a witch. Bila defends her from rock hurling boys, brings her food, and calls her "grandmother."

When a little girl Bila plays with, Nopoko (Roukietou Barry), becomes fatally ill with tetanus, he enlists the aid of Sana. Against the villagers' wishes, Bila and his stepmother use Sana's herbal medicine to cure the girl. Though never reintegrated into the village, Sana remains the children's friend until she dies a peaceful death.

"Yaaba" turns these simple ingredients into a powerful film whose subject is essential human traits of goodness and generosity, evil, fear, superstition, intolerance. It is professionally lensed by Matthias Kälin and charmingly scored by Francis Bebey. Shot in helmer's own village, pic is full of very credible nonpro actors.

— *Yung.*